

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

*Please amend the claims as follows:*

1. (Previously presented) A spindle motor comprising:

a chassis;

a rotor magnet;

a rotor-side bearing member;

a stator-side bearing member;

a rotor hub having a hollow circular hole and disposed to the center of rotation;

a support column secured to the chassis; and

a stator armature having a wound coil and disposed to the chassis in a position confronting the rotor magnet;

wherein the support column is disposed to the chassis in a manner to pass through the hollow circular hole in the rotor hub;

wherein the chassis has a protruding portion in an area around the support column, and a height of the protruding portion is greater than a height of the stator-side bearing member; and

wherein the rotor-side bearing member, in combination with the stator-side bearing member disposed to the chassis, forms a fluid bearing for supporting the rotor hub,

wherein the support column, the rotor-side bearing member, the stator-side bearing member and the protruding portion are disposed in this order from a central axis, and the protruding portion is disposed outside the fluid bearing.

2. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the fluid bearing comprises:

a thrust bearing having a dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two axially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member, and

a radial bearing having another dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two radially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member.

3. (Currently amended) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the rotor hub and the rotor-side bearing member are made of a [[same]] single material and formed integrally.

4. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises a flat portion and a cylindrical portion, and the flat portion and the cylindrical portion are made of separate pieces and assembled into a unit.

5. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises only a cylindrical portion.

6-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the protruding portion of the chassis is formed into a shape that a part of the protruding portion extending beyond an upper end of the stator-side bearing member is tapered so that a diameter of the part becomes smaller the more the protruding portion extends above the upper end of the bearing member.

9. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 4, wherein the support column has a threaded portion in a tip end of the cylindrical portion.

10. (Previously presented) A disk drive unit provided with a spindle motor, the spindle motor comprising:

a chassis;

a rotor magnet;

a rotor-side bearing member;

a stator-side bearing member;

a rotor hub having a hollow circular hole and disposed to the center of rotation;

a support column secured to the chassis; and

a stator having a wound coil and disposed to the chassis in a position confronting the rotor magnet;

wherein the support column is disposed to the chassis in a manner to pass through the hollow circular hole in the rotor hub;

the disk drive unit further comprising:

a disk having a recording layer formed on a surface thereof, and disposed to an upper surface of a flange portion of the rotor hub in the spindle motor;

a cover having an abutment portion in abutment on one of tip ends of the cylindrical portion constituting the support column in the spindle motor;

a signal conversion element for recording and reproducing data in the recording layer formed on the disk; and

a swing member for positioning the signal conversion element to a predetermined tracking position;

wherein the chassis has a protruding portion in an area around the support column, and a height of the protruding portion is greater than a height of the stator-side bearing member; and

wherein the rotor-side bearing member, in combination with the stator-side bearing member disposed to the chassis, forms a fluid bearing for supporting the rotor hub,

wherein the support column, the rotor-side bearing member, the stator-side bearing member and the protruding portion are disposed in this order from a central axis, and the protruding portion is disposed outside the fluid bearing.

11. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein:  
the support column of the spindle motor has a threaded portion in a tip end of the cylindrical portion;

the cover is provided with a through hole in a position of the abutment portion corresponding to the threaded portion of the support column; and

the cover is held in abutment on and secured to the tip end of the cylindrical portion of the support column with a screw in the through hole of the cover.

12. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the fluid bearing comprises:

a thrust bearing having a dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two axially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member; and

a radial bearing having another dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two radially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member.

13. (Currently amended) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the rotor hub and the rotor-side bearing member are made of a [[same]] single material and formed integrally.

14. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises a flat portion and a cylindrical portion, and the flat portion and the cylindrical portion are made of separate pieces and assembled into a unit.

15. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises only a cylindrical portion.

16-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the protruding portion of the chassis is formed into a shape that a part of the protruding portion extending beyond an upper end of the stator-side bearing member is tapered so that a diameter of the part becomes smaller the more the protruding portion extends above the upper end of the bearing member.

19-22. (Cancelled)